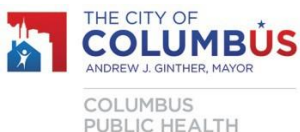


# Healthy Habits Action Kit

Healthy Activities • Healthy Eating • Healthy Growing • Healthy Families





# Healthy Activities

Children need at least **An Hour a Day to Play** or some form of physical activity to promote resiliency and overall health. Healthy activity for young children includes a combination of structured and unstructured physical activity throughout their day, as well as limiting sedentary time.

## Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

### What are ACEs?<sup>1, 2</sup>

ACEs are extremely stressful events that can happen to children (i.e., divorce, neglect or abuse). Some experiences are so stressful that they can alter brain development and the immune system which increases the risk of lifelong health and social problems in adulthood.

### How can child care providers assist children in dealing with ACEs?

Although you can't prevent a child from experiencing ACEs, you can build healthy environments and make associations for healthy behaviors for children in your care. By building these healthy associations for children, it will help build resilience. Children can develop resilience by:

- Having strong relationships with adults
- Mastering a skill
- Learning problem solving
- Experiencing small mistakes

### Where can I learn more about ACEs?

- [ACEs Primer video](#)
- [CRIresilient.org](http://CRIresilient.org)
- [ACEs Too High](#)

## An Hour a Day to Play

### How is physical activity related to ACEs?<sup>3</sup>

One way to cope with stressful events is to find rhythm. Rhythm, such as swaying back and forth, twirling your hair or clicking a pen, can be soothing and help you feel calmer. Find ways to incorporate physical activity when you sense a child is feeling stressed. Allow children to bounce a ball, jump rope, swing back and forth on the playground swings, or set their own pace to walk/run around the playground.

### What are the benefits of physical activity?

- Builds strong bones and muscles
- Helps achieve and maintain a healthy weight
- Improves strength and endurance
- Provides an opportunity for children to make friends
- Increases self-esteem and reduces stress/anxiety

### What is structured physical activity?

Structured physical activity is planned, teacher-directed activities where the teacher provides instruction before or during the activity and gives positive constructive feedback. Examples include singing songs with active motions (music and movement), Simon Says, Head Shoulder Knees and Toes, etc.

### What is unstructured physical activity?

Unstructured activity is often referred to as “free play.” This includes time on the playground or “choice play time.”

### What is sedentary time?

This includes any activities done while sitting or lying down like listening to a book or watching television.

### What are the recommendations for physical activity during early care?<sup>4</sup>

Age Group	Recommendation
Infant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Need opportunities to be naturally active for appropriate development as they begin exploring their world.</li></ul>
Toddler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 30 minutes of structured</li><li>• 60 minutes of unstructured</li></ul>
Preschool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 60 minutes of structured</li><li>• 60 minutes of unstructured</li></ul>
School Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accumulate a minimum of 60 minutes of physical activity per day</li><li>• In after-school programs, a minimum of 30 minutes of physical activity</li></ul>

### Does physical activity have to happen all at once?

Physical activity does **NOT** need to happen all at once. Break up the day by adding short activity breaks into the children’s routine. Breaks can be as simple as playing fun music and dancing if they have been inactive for a while. Children should not be sedentary for more than 60 minutes at a time.

### How to promote physical activity in infants?

- Include time on back, tummies and sitting upright.
- Encourage children to reach, kick, roll over and discover their surroundings.
- Limit time in swings and seats.

- Provide tummy time as it is important for strengthening muscles and rolling over.
- Create a safe space with electrical outlet covers and limiting sharp corners.

### **Why is it recommended that teachers participate in physical activity in the classroom?**

Teachers are important role models for children. Move with them to make sure they see how important physical activity is. Participating with the children will make these activities more fun and exciting for the children as well.

### **Where can I find structured physical activity ideas?**

The [Ring of Fun](#) activity cards highlight creative classroom ideas for physical activities and incorporate the [Early Learning and Development Standards](#) to provide a quick reference for teachers who are incorporating the standards into their curriculum.

## **Reduce Screen Time**

### **What is considered screen time?**

Screen time is much more than just watching television. It includes movies, video games, computer time and apps on phones and other electronic devices.

### **Why is it important to Reduce Screen Time?<sup>5</sup>**

With the increase in technology, children are spending more time than ever in front of a screen and less time being active. According to the Institute of Medicine, children who are exposed to more than 2 hours of television per day are at greater risk of becoming overweight or obese, inactivity, decreased metabolic rate and increased snack consumption.

### **What are the recommendations for screen time in early care?**

[American Academy of Pediatrics](#) recommends:

- Screen time not be permitted for children younger than 2 years.\_\_\_\_
- For children 2 years and older total media time should be limited to no more than 30 minutes per week, and for educational or physical activity use only.

### **What are the recommendations for screen time in after-school programs?**

The [National AfterSchool Association](#) recommends:

- Television and movies are not permitted in after-school programs.
- Digital device time is limited to less than one hour per day to allow for other activities.
- Digital device use is limited to homework or devices/programs that actively engage children in moderate to intense physical activity.

### **Are there additional screen time recommendations for the classroom?**

[Team Nutrition](#) recommends:

- No screen time during meal or snack time.
- Computer use should be limited to no more than 15-minute increments except for school-age children completing homework assignments.
- No screen time during nap time.

## Good Rest is Best

### What are the ABCs of Safe Sleep?

- Alone
- On their Backs
- In a safety approved Crib

### Where can I find additional information on Safe Sleep practices for infants?

- [Ohio Department of Health](#)
  - [Nationwide Children's Hospital](#)
  - [American Academy of Pediatrics Ohio Chapter](#)
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# Healthy Eating

Young children typically consume half to three quarters of their daily intake while in full time early care.<sup>1</sup> According to the National Academy of Medicine (NAM), children who experience healthy eating behaviors early in life are more likely to practice healthy eating habits that promote a healthy weight.<sup>2</sup> As an early care provider, this provides you a powerful opportunity to expose children to a wide variety of healthy foods, including whole fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins and low-fat dairy impacting the children's future health.

## How can we support a mother's choice to breastfeed?

- Provide a private room or area, not a bathroom, for mothers to breastfeed or pump.
- Make sure mothers are aware that you support breastfeeding (i.e., posters, written policy in parent handbook, verbal awareness, etc.).
- Receive the [Breastfeeding Friendly Designation](#) awarded by the Ohio Department of Health

## What if a child wants seconds?

Seconds are always welcomed when offering a wide variety of healthy foods. According to the division of responsibility:<sup>4</sup>

Adults are responsible for:	Children are responsible for:
<b>what</b> food will be served	<b>whether or not</b> they will eat
<b>where</b> it will be served	<b>how much</b> they will eat
<b>when</b> it will be served	

You should never force a child to eat certain amounts of foods or clean their plate as this may impair the child's ability to regulate his or her own hunger cues.<sup>2</sup>

## How can you tell when an infant is full?

Infants can signal fullness by:

- Turning their head
- Falling asleep

- Becoming calm and relaxed
- Losing interest in eating
- Crying and fussing if feeding persists

### **How can I encourage picky eaters to try new foods?**

- Be a role model! Sit, eat and talk with children during mealtime and eat the same food as often as possible.
- Smile! Facial expressions have a big impact on how children react to new foods.
- Offer familiar with unfamiliar foods such as pizza with squash.
- Make new foods fun! Call them 'Super Hero Foods' that will make them big and strong.
- Allow children to eat what they like and encourage (NOT FORCE) new foods.
- Offer new foods repeatedly. Remember it can take up to 20 exposures for young children to accept a new food!<sup>5</sup>
  - Exposure means the food is on the table and offered to the child, not necessarily that the child has even tasted the food.
- Have them join the ["Two Bite Club."](#) a book from Team Nutrition that discusses the food groups and encourages children to try new foods.

Remember, children may not always be hungry at every meal. This is why it is important to offer a wide variety of nutritious foods throughout the day including snacks. Doing so allows children to fill in nutrients they may have missed at lunch if they did not complete their meal.

### **What can I do to start family style dining?**

Get child sized equipment:

- Dishware
- Utensils
- Cleaning supplies
- Furniture

Implement gradually:

- Start in one classroom or with one group of children at a time.
- Choose foods that children can easily serve themselves.

For more information on how to start family-style dining, check out OCCRRA's Family Style Dining Guide, available at: <https://cdn.occrra.org/documents/fsd.pdf>

### **How do I get others to take part in making healthy eating a priority?**

Be an advocate:

- Hang posters and distribute handouts on Growing Healthy Kids key messages.
- Incorporate cooking and nutrition education into your lesson plan using the Rings of Fun.
- Educate parents on the importance of healthy eating using tips from Healthy Families.
- Talk with the person in charge of the menus such as the administrator, cook, caterer or colleague. Present them the Ohio Healthy Programs menu requirements and share the [Healthy Menu resources](#) to assist in making these changes.

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# Healthy Growing

Starting a garden is a great way to promote healthy nutrition, teach early learning competencies and help children build self-esteem.

## Self-Esteem and Body Image

### Why focus on self-esteem in young children?

Self-esteem starts early. Young children are developing body image and self-esteem as well as positive or negative feelings towards physical activity and eating behaviors. By 5 years old, children already have good and bad feelings about their bodies. A social stigma has developed surrounding obesity. **Social stigma** refers to severe **social** disapproval of personal characteristics that are against cultural norms.

### What is body image?

Body image is the way someone feels about the way their body looks.

### What can I do to affect children's self-esteem and body image?

Adults are powerful role models and their behaviors help children develop a healthy body image. Use positive words to describe yourself and others. Do not focus on weight or appearance or discuss dieting in front of children. Build children up with words by praising them for accomplishments, behavior or characteristics other than their appearance.

One way we can build children's self-esteem is by using process praise, rather than evaluative language. Use the following tips to provide healthy encouragement:

- Avoid evaluative language. This type of praise emphasizes the caregiver's evaluation or opinion of the child's action, for example: "I like how you made your friend smile."
- Use process praise. Focus praise on the child's positive action or the *process* that produced a positive result, like in the example: "I see how you held the door for your friend and how that made them smile."
- Try to limit generic praise such as "I'm so proud of you!" or "Good job!" Instead, be observant and give specific praise.

Another way to promote positive self-esteem is to engage children in an activity that allows them to feel a sense of accomplishment. Gardening, or growing anything in the classroom, can be one way to showcase their achievement while also encouraging and supporting healthy food choices.

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## Gardening in the Classroom

### How do I get started with gardening?

You can start growing a garden anywhere, anytime! A balcony, ledge, rooftop, windowsill, patio or deck all work well, or use a container and start growing indoors in a sunny spot or with a growing light. Consider using old wagons and sandboxes with soil as planters. Check with local garden experts to determine the right month to start plants indoors or when planting outside.

### How do I include children in growing a garden?

Let kids help pick out seeds or seedlings to plant. Include a variety of favorite foods and new foods. Children can help plant seeds, water and participate in crafts and activities with garden themes.

### How do I encourage children to try foods we grow?

Children are more willing to try new foods they helped grow which can lead to better health and nutrition. Encourage children to try just one bite when new foods are introduced. The chance to taste a food many times helps young children grow into adventurous eaters. Encourage children to discuss the foods they try including color, shape, texture and taste. Click [here](#) to access resources from USDA's Team Nutrition to get kids more involved in gardening.

### What are some ways to include gardening in lessons?

Gardening can provide a number of learning opportunities that contribute to each child's individual growth and development and can easily be incorporated into lesson plans addressing Ohio's [Early Learning and Development Standards](#) (ELDS).

Gardening offers children an opportunity to connect with nature and be outdoors, increasing gross motor skills and introduces children to where food comes from. Many children, particularly those living in urban areas, may have no experience with food outside of a grocery store or restaurant. The [Growing Healthy Kids Ring of Fun](#) offers many examples of ELDS-linked activities to include gardening in the classroom.

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## Farm to School

What is Farm to School or Farm to Early Care?

The [National Farm to School Network](#) connects schools and early care and education providers with local food partners to:

- Serve local, healthy food to students
- Improve student nutrition
- Provide agriculture, health and nutrition education opportunities
- Support local and regional farmers

### How can Farm to Early Care support my program?

Farm to School programs have been shown to have many benefits:

- Children ate more fruits and vegetables and were more willing to try new foods.
- Young children asked their families to make healthier purchases more often.
- Parents were more able to and interested in adding healthier foods to their family diets and guiding children to make healthier choices.
- Helped children understand agriculture and the environment.
- Gave children opportunities for social and emotional growth.

- Improved children's life skills, self-esteem, social skills and behavior.

Click [here](#) to learn more about the benefits of Farm to School practices.

### **How can I incorporate Farm to Early Care in my program?**

There are many ways that you can support the Farm to School movement in your classroom:

- Support the use of local foods in meals and snacks.
- Talk to children about where the food came from. If it's a new food, encourage them to try at least one bite.
- Take children on a field trip to a farm or farmers market in your area, or invite a farmer to visit your classroom.
- Have a tasting of local produce in your classroom.
- Start an edible garden.

Click [here](#) to learn more about getting started.

### **How can I use CACFP funds to purchase items for edible gardens such as seeds, fertilizer, rakes and watering cans?**

Produce grown using CACFP funds must be used as part of a reimbursable meal or snack and for nutrition education. If your garden makes more produce than the children in your program can eat, you can sell it to parents, at a roadside stand, etc., as long as the money made from the produce goes back into the food service account to be used to purchase reimbursable meals and snacks for the children.

Talk to your CACFP specialist or click the following links for more information on how your program can use funds to start an edible garden in a [center](#) or [family child care provider](#) setting.



# Healthy Families

## What is family engagement?

Family engagement is essential for enhancing children's learning and family well-being. According to the [National Association for the Education of Young Children](#), "family engagement occurs when there is an on-going, reciprocal, strengths-based partnership between families and their children's early childhood education programs."<sup>1</sup> Examples may include: bulletin boards, newsletters, healthy homework, creating a cookbook with healthy recipes from families or hosting a family night.

## Why is family engagement important?

The [Center for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) states that strong family engagement will help ensure successful implementation of policy and practices in the early child care setting and can improve home environments and families' behaviors.<sup>2</sup> As a care provider, you have the opportunity to influence a child's environment and daily routine as well as opportunities to talk with families.

## How do I effectively engage and communicate with families?

### 1. Build a partnership with families:

Find things you have in common and make them feel heard and respected. Daily communication is key. Families trust you to care for their child and to communicate when their child hits a milestone or experiences a challenge.

### 2. Integrate culture and community:

- a. Incorporate activities from the [Healthy Celebrations Ring of Fun](#) into the curriculum to teach about cultural practices and traditions of all families.
- b. Learn first-hand about families' culture and community by interacting with them outside of the early care setting in the communities where they live.
- c. Hold family meetings or events in a neutral location within their community. This will likely increase attendance due to transportation and convenience.<sup>3</sup>
- d. Allow families opportunities to participate in decisions or changes you may make.

### 3. Engage in face-to-face conversations:<sup>4</sup>

- a. Ask open ended questions.
- b. Actively listen by reflecting, restating and validating concerns.
- c. Keep it simple. Use language that families understand in documents and in conversations.
- d. Have information and resources available (e.g., handouts, websites, videos, referrals for social services, etc.).
- e. Create a culture of openness and respect that encourages frequent communication, input and feedback.
- f. Let families know that you value and appreciate their input.
- g. Keep families informed and invite them to participate in all events.

### 4. Use a variety of communication formats:

Ask families to indicate how they would like to receive information. Options may include:

- a. Paper (handouts or posters)
- b. E-mail
- c. Posted on a website
- d. Text message
- e. Face-to-face communication
- f. Phone call

Be sure to ask all families their preferred method of communication and language.<sup>1</sup>

### 5. Create a monthly health campaign:

Use one of the 13 Growing Healthy Kids key messages and follow the steps below to ensure the message is being heard.

- a. [Hang posters and distribute handouts](#) on the message.
- b. Create a discussion board around the selected message.
- c. Form weekly open-ended questions related to the message that you can discuss with parents at drop off and pick-up.
- d. Plan weekly activities for the children about the message using activities from the [Ring of Fun](#).
- e. Utilize resources from the [Healthy Gatherings](#) campaign.

### 6. Host a family night:

Get families involved from the beginning. Form a planning committee, conduct a questionnaire, engage in one-on-one conversation and ask for input. Here are a few ideas to get started:

- a. Have a family adventure walk
- b. Host a potluck using one of the [DIY Potluck sign-up sheets](#)
- c. Create an art show of children's artwork and set up craft stations
- d. Arrange evening family field trips to the local museum, zoo, pool, etc.
- e. Organize a family game night
- f. Invite a guest speaker to talk about a hot topic or lead a group fitness class

### 7. Create a Healthy Celebration

Healthy celebrations help promote a healthy lifestyle and show families that holidays and special occasions are not all about cakes and cookies. Put the emphasis on what is being celebrated, rather than food served. Use the chart below to plan your next event:

Book	Music	Physical Activity Game	Craft	Healthy Snack	Unsweetened Beverage

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